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Ruth Adams¹

Tourism, creative industries and (youth) subcultures in the UK

Turismo, indústrias criativas e subculturas (jovens) no Reino Unido

Resumo

Se considerarmos os aspectos da cultura britânica que se acredita que mais atraem os turistas, quais atrativos vêm à mente? Convencionalmente, têm sido atrações como os castelos antigos e velhas casas de campo, belo litoral e interior, a Família Real e o “chá inglês”. Muitos turistas também visitam os museus, galerias e teatros de Londres e de outras grandes cidades. A cultura popular é também uma impulsionadora do turismo no Reino Unido e vem atraindo fãs de filmes e séries de televisão como Harry Potter, Game of Thrones e Doctor Who, interessados em visitar a locação de filmes e parques temáticos. Alguns turistas desejam se conectar com a história da música britânica e com (sub)culturas jovens e podem explorar, por exemplo, os legados dos Beatles e dos “Swinging Sixties” (termo usado para descrever os efervescentes anos 1960 em Londres) ou as cenas e os sons do punk rock. Visitantes do exterior também podem fazer uma imersão na arte contemporânea, na música e na cultura da moda britânica – em festivais e casas noturnas, em lojas e mercados e em visitas guiadas de “cultura de rua” –, e estas experiências vêm crescendo em importância e proeminência na economia do turismo britânico. Este artigo vai examinar a relação crescente entre o turismo, as indústrias criativas e as subculturas/jovens no Reino Unido e discutir algumas questões derivadas, como até que ponto este movimento poderá ser considerado um desenvolvimento positivo e sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Indústrias culturais; economia do Turismo; Turismo de subculturas; subcultura jovem

Abstract

If we consider the aspects of British culture that might be expected to appeal most to tourists, what are the first things to come to mind? Conventionally it has been attractions such as ancient castles and pretty old cottages, beautiful coastlines and countryside, the Royal Family and “British tea time”. Many tourists also visit the museums, galleries and theatres of London and other big cities. Popular culture is also a driver for tourism in the UK, and is attracting fans of movies and television shows such as Harry Potter, Game of Thrones and Doctor Who, keen to visit filming locations and theme parks. Some tourists wish to connect with the history of Britain’s music and youth (sub)cultures and can explore, for example, the legacies of the Beatles and the “Swinging Sixties”, or the sights and sounds of punk rock. Visitors from overseas can also immerse themselves in the UK’s contemporary art, music and fashion cultures - at festivals and nightclubs, in shops and markets, and on “street culture” tours - and these types of experience are growing in importance and prominence in Britain’s tourism economy. This article, then, will examine the evolving relationship between tourism, the creative industries and youth/subcultures in the UK and consider some of the arguments and issues arising from it, such as the extent to which this might be considered a positive and sustainable development.

Keywords: cultural industries; tourism economy; subcultural tourism; youth subculture.

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If we consider the aspects of British culture that might be expected to appeal most to tourists, what are the first things to come to mind? Conventionally it has been attractions such as ancient castles and pretty old cottages, beautiful coastlines and countryside, the Royal Family and “British tea time”. Many tourists also visit the museums, galleries and theatres of London and other big cities². British popular music and fashion subcultures – such as mod, skinhead, punk, and goth – are famous throughout the world and endlessly recreated in revival movements and local scenes globally. It is therefore understandable that their fans and adherents might be keen to make a “pilgrimage” to their birthplace, and the appeal of these eccentric and spectacular elements of British culture to more mainstream visitors is also readily comprehensible. Tourism focused on subcultures is both attractive and profitable, but it might also be argued to be problematic in some aspects. To understand why this might be, it is helpful to look at the definition of a subculture in sociological terms. A subculture can be understood as a group of people and cultural practices that are outside of, marginalized by, or oppositional to the mainstream of culture and society.

In some instances these subcultures are explicitly and deliberately political, while in others they are political just because they represent a refusal to conform. Some subcultures are non-conformist by choice, while others find themselves such simply because they represent a minority, or a less powerful group in society, such as black people or gay people. These types of subcultures can be regarded as important because, as Dick Hebdige (1979, p. 16) has argued, they have represented a “symbolic challenge” to existing power structures and relations, and as such, have disrupted the hegemony, or “total social authority” exerted by dominant over subordinate groups. This is an authority that is maintained “not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by “winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural” (Hall, 1977, p. 15-16).

For obvious reasons, the ruling classes do not welcome challenges or disruptions to their authority, so in order to minimize such disruptions and maintain control they seek to “recuperate” them within their own preferred social and economic narratives, and in doing so make them both “safe” and “useful”. This is a process that can be witnessed again and again in the history of youth subcultures; they offer challenges to authority which are briefly effective in disrupting prevailing ideas and aesthetics, before being diffused by and absorbed within the mainstream. A subculture may persist, but any “threat” that it might have represented is significantly diminished, although the nature of the hegemonic culture is also irrevocably altered to accommodate the challenges it posed. Hebdige (1979) identifies two “characteristic” forms of recuperation: “the ‘labelling’ and re-definition of deviant

² Figures produced by ALVA (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions) show that three most popular museums in London alone (The British Museum, The National Gallery and Tate Modern) attracted more than 18.5 million visitors in 2016 <http://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=423>, and the Society of London Theatre (SOLT) records attendance figures of over 14 million in the same year <http://solt.co.uk/about-london-theatre/facts-and-figures/>

behaviour by dominant groups – the police, the media, the judiciary”, which can be termed the ‘ideological’ form, and “the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects”, the “commodity” form (HEBDIGE, 1979, p.94). A further, related, form of recuperation is, I would suggest, the absorption of subcultures within dominant, and even official, versions of national and cultural history and heritage. Perhaps the most high-profile examples of such recuperation in the UK were the opening and closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympic Games. This “global spectacle”, observes Les Roberts:

would have left few doubting the value and importance of popular music in the cultural imaginary of twenty-first century Britain. Musicians and artists from The Beatles, to The Jam, to the East London rapper Dizzee Rascal were amongst the dizzying roll-call of bands and performers woven into a rich tapestry of national cultural heritage [...] As well as the Opening and Closing Ceremony performances concerts programmed as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad – a cultural festival that runs concurrently with the Games – showcased a sample of what was widely billed as the “Best of British” popular music “heritage”. (ROBERTS, 2014, p. 262)

This emphasis is evident too on the website for “VisitBritain”, the UK’s government-backed tourist board, which has whole pages dedicated to popular music and subcultural tourism, covering festivals, carnivals, concert venues, nightclubs, gay scenes, walking tours, record shops and, of course, the ever-ubiquitous Beatles. If, in this manifestation of the commodity form, subcultures (past and present) become a means to sell a nation to visitors and investors, supported by government and business-backed tourist agencies, what are the implications for subcultures and the communities from which they originated? Is this visibility enabling or exploitative? If culture is presented for, and sold to tourists, can it still be authentic and meaningful to its original producers? How does it help shape identities, and ideas of place and locality? What are the relationships between musical and cultural pasts, presents and futures? When does popular music “culture” become popular music “heritage”? Who or what gets included in the “official” discourses of popular music heritage and tourism, and who gets excluded? Who gets to decide what is included or excluded? And finally, and perhaps most importantly, given the focus of this article, what are the implications of oppositional cultures becoming subsumed into an establishment, hegemonic version of national identity, and who or what are the ultimate benefactors? I want to explore some of these issues in this article by looking at a variety of illustrative examples; I will begin, however, by exploring the background and context for these debates, by defining some key concepts, and providing some facts and figures.

Tourism is a massive global business that has demonstrated exponential and “virtually uninterrupted” growth since the second half of the 20th century. According to figures produced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) between 1950 and 2015 the number of international trips grew from 25 to 1186 million. International tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase by 3.3% a year, to reach 1.8 billion by 2030 (UNWTO, 2016). Consequently, almost

everywhere in the world wants to be part of this industry because of its potential to generate employment, earn taxes for local and national governments, and stimulate destination economies through increased regional income. Tourism is a very important part of the UK economy. In 2013 it was calculated to support nearly 10% of the UK workforce, over 3 million jobs, and accounted for 9% of GDP, bringing in nearly £127 billion. It is a growth area, and is expected to be worth over £250 billion by 2025 (VISITBRITAIN, w/d). The growth of tourism can be linked to the increasing significance of what Pine and Gilmour called “the experience economy”. An experience occurs, they propose,

when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event. [...] Buyers of experiences [...] value what the company reveals over a duration of time. While prior economic offerings – commodities, goods, and services – are external to the buyer, experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level (PINE; GILMOUR, 1998, p.98-99).

The cultural and creative industries (of which some elements of tourism and experience economies form part, or are closely related to) are also an increasingly significant sector, particularly in post-industrial countries such as the UK. In 2016, PricewaterhouseCoopers calculated the turnover of the world’s entertainment and media industries at US\$1.8 trillion (SPANGLER, 2017). In the 1990s, the creative economy in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries grew at twice the rate of service industries, and four times that of manufacturing industries (DER POL, 2008). The European Union cultural and creative sector - television, cinema, music, performing arts, and entertainment - generated €654 billion and contributed to 2.6% of the European Union’s GDP in 2003. In 2004, the culture sector employed an estimated 5.8 million people in Europe, more than the total working population of Greece and Ireland combined (DER POL, 2008). Official statistics published in 2016 stated that the UK’s creative industries are worth £84.1 billion per year to the UK economy, which equates to £9.6 million each hour. In 2014 the sector grew by almost 8.9%, almost double that of the UK economy as a whole. The UK Creative Economy provided 2.8 million jobs in 2014, which is more than 9% of all British jobs (GOV.UK, 2016). So, what are the cultural and creative Industries? The terms “cultural industry” and “creative industry” are often used interchangeably, and sometimes combined. For example, one of the programmes I teach at King’s College London is called Masters in Cultural & Creative Industries. Some authors have attempted to make a clear distinction between the two, but these categories are disputed, so, for the purposes of this article, we can assume a close relation. Currently, the UK government identifies nine key sectors as comprising the creative industries. They are: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design – including product, graphic and fashion design; film, television, video, radio and photography; Information Technology (IT), software and computer services; publishing

and translation; museums, galleries and libraries; and music, performing arts and visual arts (GOV.uk, 2016).

When the New Labour government came to power in the UK in 1997 under the leadership of Tony Blair, they actively promoted the concept of the “creative industries”. This terminology explicitly brought the types of creative arts previously subsidised by public funding into an economic policy agenda. New Labour deliberately replaced the term “cultural industries” with “creative industries”. They did this, argue Susan Galloway and Stewart Dunlop, because it was seen to be a “unifying” and “democratising” notion. It bridged the divide between “high” and “low” culture – between the fine arts and mass market, popular culture. (GALLOWAY; DUNLOP, 2006). This new government wanted to appear “cool” and forward looking. They invited a number of pop stars and fashion designers to events at the Prime Minister’s house, and asked them for their opinions and support. Creative industries policy also bridged the divide between “art” and “industry” – between what had traditionally attracted government funding and the “commercial” sector. One effect of this was that, although public subsidy for the arts continued, and in some instances was enlarged, cultural organisations were increasingly encouraged to regard themselves as functioning within the context of a commercial and competitive creative economy, and to operate accordingly.

These growth sectors of tourism, experience and the creative industries share a strong emphasis on culture. The majority of tourism might be described as cultural tourism, which can be defined as *trips that are undertaken with the express intention of experiencing the culture of a different place or type of person*. UNWTO reports that approximately half of all international trips every year involve visits to cultural and cultural heritage sites. Dean McCannell (1976) suggests that, in order for a place or a thing to be transformed into a “site”, a “sight”, or a “destination”, it must undergo a process of sacralisation. In other words, it must be made “sacred” - although not necessarily in the strictly religious sense of the word – in order to function as a stop-off point on the contemporary secular pilgrimage of world tourism. McCannell (1976) argues that there is a hierarchy between those sites which were designed to be tourist attractions, and those which have become such through what might be loosely termed as a more “organic” process of history and society, with the latter having greater “authenticity”.

Authenticity is an extremely important concept, perhaps more accurately described as a value, in both cultural tourism and the creation and consumption of subcultures. In both contexts, authenticity is allied with a sense of “the real”, whether this be places, objects, people or experiences, and reflects McCannell’s dichotomy between the “organic” and the “constructed”. The status, or “validity” of a tourism experience is often related to its perceived authenticity. However, authenticity in tourism and subcultures demonstrates a problematic paradox. From some perspectives the very presence of tourists fatally compromises the authenticity of a site or experience. Tourists in search of, for example, the “real” London, as experienced by “real” Londoners, are arguably instrumental in the very destruction of the au-

thenticity they seek. In the context of subcultures, claims to authenticity are often related to factors such as being an originator or early adopter of a subculture; being in the right place at the right time with the right people (for example, attending an early-career gig of an iconic band at an iconic venue – The Beatles at the Cavern or The Sex Pistols at the 100 Club being oft-cited examples of such); a long-term commitment to a subcultural style, or a commitment to the “correct” or “original” interpretation of a style. The “selling out” of a subcultural style through popularization, dilution and mass-market commercialization – and a consequent widespread, casual adoption and exploitation of that style – are seen as threats to authenticity. Early adopters of a subculture might renounce their affiliation with the style following its move into the mainstream, or they may assert ever more arcane markers of their own authenticity to distinguish themselves from the more “plastic”, derivative variants. However, they might also use their “subcultural capital” and claims to authenticity as selling points to tourists eager to engage with these types of culture and history.

Some scholars of both tourism and subcultural studies have questioned the usefulness of the concept of authenticity as an objective quality. Because ideas of authenticity are related to specific values and contexts they are not neutral and can therefore be subject to manipulations to suit the agendas or advance the claims of particular individuals or groups. Authenticity, then, is not an absolute quality, but a diverse and strategic one. Ning Wang (1999) constructs a typology of authenticity in touristic contexts, including “objective” and “constructive”, and suggests that the most important and meaningful form is what he categorises as “existential” authenticity. He argues that

existential authenticity, unlike [the] object-related version, can often have nothing to do with the issue of whether toured objects are real. In search of tourist experience which is existentially authentic, tourists are preoccupied with an existential state of Being activated by certain tourist activities (WANG, 1999, p. 359).

In other words, the authenticity of the objects of tourism is less important than the perceived authenticity of the feelings that they inspire in tourists. Wang cites Daniel’s study (1996) of rumba dance performances in Cuba as an example of this type of existential authenticity in tourism. In this instance, the sense of authenticity is derived from tourists participating in the event rather than just watching, and the feelings of “being in the moment” and engagement with a culture far removed from their everyday lives. The connections here with the concept of the “experience economy” are clear. In such a context, concerns about whether the music or the setting are traditional or “authentic” in an objective sense can be eclipsed by their capacity to produce an alternative, ontological mode of authenticity in which tourists can be active, creative participants rather than merely passive (or even destructive) spectators.

I want to look now at some examples of the ways in which the UK’s past and present youth cultures and youth subcultures are promoted as heritage attractions

and tourist destinations, and some of the issues around these examples. Pop music heritage and tourism can take a variety of different forms such as museums and galleries, archives, venues and performance spaces, and also memorial sites, such as heritage plaques, rock “shrines”, gravestones and heritage trails. The most famous musicians associated with the UK are, of course, the Beatles, and they are an industry themselves. Accordingly, a whole section of the VisitBritain website is devoted to attractions relating to the band (VISITBRITAIN,w/d). Although also associated with particular sites in London, such as Abbey Road Recording Studios and Carnaby Street, the British city that capitalizes most on its Beatles connection is Liverpool, in the North West of England. This was the city where John, Paul, George and Ringo were born and raised, and where the band was formed. The cultural geographer Robert J Kruse (2005) has made a study of various Beatles-related sites and attractions in Liverpool and observes that many of them are marketed for international tourists, and this has become “a well-coordinated and highly lucrative industry”. However, it is also a diverse offer, and is comprised of “a variety of landscapes both commercial and vernacular that are represented in various ways to visitors. In addition to tourism, the places that comprise the landscapes of the Beatles carry narratives of secular pilgrimage, and national and regional identity” (KRUSE, 2005, p.89). One reasons for its success is that Beatles tourism is not just about business. The mythology of the band is also kept alive in meaningful ways in the hearts of minds of locals and visiting fans, an example of Wang’s “existential” authenticity. This emotional engagement perhaps compensates for the questionable authenticity in an objective sense of some of the attractions. For example, Mathew Street, the site of the original Cavern Club where the Beatles famously made many of their early appearances is now, Kruse observes, “a patchwork of “authentic” and commercial places which together create the impression of a coherent Beatles landscape in downtown Liverpool. (KRUSE, 2005, p.93). These include a reconstructed but otherwise authentic Cavern Club, “authentic in its location, architecture and interior design—the bricks from the original were used to rebuild it” (KRUSE, 2005, p.92). This is now a functioning club that features live performers, many of them local artists. Across the street from this quasi-authentic place is the Cavern Pub, which opened in 1994 and has no real connection to the Beatles. However, half a block down the street is a pub called The Grapes, where the Beatles did drink. One block down from The Grapes is The Beatles Shop, selling Beatles-related novelties and souvenirs. This area has been renamed the “Cavern Quarter” to lend it a coherent sense of “place”, and to enable it to be marketed under a single, easily recognisable identity. A short walk from the Cavern Quarter is the redeveloped Albert Dock, home to The Beatles Story Museum, an indoor attraction that features, among other artifacts, a replica of the Cavern Club. Of course, the current Cavern Club in the town centre is also a reproduction of an original that no longer exists. Kruse suggests that

[w]ith the absence of the original, it becomes a matter of replicating replicas. Hence, the representation of the Cavern Club as being the same place in different places is characteristic of a postmodern era conceived by the French postmodern philosopher Baudrillard as “hyperreal”. [...] However,

the surviving Beatles' endorsement of the new Cavern Club allows it to forward a discourse of authenticity that suggests an imaginative authenticity that history negates. (KRUSE, 2005, p.100).

The Beatles Story Museum also sells tickets for the Magical Mystery bus tour of the Beatles' Liverpool. The coaches are replicas of the one featured in the Beatles' 1967 made-for-television film, *Magical Mystery Tour*. This tour "visits" the house where Ringo Starr was born, the roundabout at Penny Lane, and the church where John and Paul met. These are very ordinary places, but, framed by what sociologist John Urry (2011) has called "the tourist gaze", Kruse observes that they become extraordinary. One stop on the tour is Paul McCartney's childhood home, a very modest two-floor brick house, which was, at the time the McCartneys lived in it, public housing. The property is now owned by the National Trust, the UK's leading heritage and conservation charity, and has a plaque on the front to indicate this. The National Trust bought the house in 1995 and it was the first time that this organisation had acquired a building that was significant because of its association with modern popular culture (NATIONAL TRUST, w/d).

For the most part, it is a wholesome, "cleaned up" version of the Beatles that is promoted in Liverpool tourism. Most of the images of the band portray its members at the ages they were during their Liverpool years, i.e. young, and in the early stages of their career. Kruse (2005) observed that most of the Beatles music played on the bus tours and in the shops and museums was also from their early period. This has the advantage not only of reinforcing the connection between the city and the band, but also allows for the convenient erasure of some of the most controversial aspects of the Beatles' history, such as their involvement with the 1960s' hippy counterculture, leftist political activism and recreational drug use. Critical heritage studies scholars suggest that this "cleaning up" is both problematic and closely connected to commercialization; Robert Hewison (1987), for example, complains that "Heritage is gradually effacing History, by substituting an image of the past for its reality". Bella Dicks (2004, p. 138) observes that tourist attractions are competing in a crowded market and, because of this, often rely on highly polished, technically sophisticated presentations, ones capable of attracting and holding the interest of visitors [...], who always have at their disposal many other choices of leisure destination.

What this means is that heritage is produced within the cultural economy of visitability [...], in which the object is to attract as many visitors as practicable to the intended site, and to communicate with them in meaningful terms. This has implications for the definitions of history which are on display. (DICKS, 2004, p.134).

So, parts of popular culture that were once conceived of as a threat to society, can be repackaged, with the difficult bits erased or played down, in order to make them suitable for mass public consumption and thus useful both economically and in place branding.

To take another example from the VisitBritain website, the “Quadrophenia Walking Tour”³ invites tourists to explore the town of Brighton, a holiday resort on the south coast of England, to see the locations used in The Who’s 1979 film about rival youth subcultures, the Mods and the Rockers, and their often violent confrontations in the early 1960s. The language used on the website to describe this tour is nostalgic and celebratory, yet at the time, the behaviour of these young people caused what has been characterised as a “moral panic” (COHEN, 2002) amongst the older and more “respectable” elements of British society. Newspaper headlines painted a picture of the “Battle of Brighton”, during which “wild ones” “invaded”, “rampaged”, and “beat up” the seaside town, causing “terror” on the beaches. Journalists focused on how many of the mods and rockers were arrested, and the number of injuries. However, over fifty years on, these elements of juvenile delinquency are largely missing from the tourist version of this history, or are recast as merely youthful enthusiasm and folly. The emphasis is firmly on encouraging an enjoyment of retro style and a celebration of a golden age of fashion and pop music.

It would seem that not even the most extreme of subcultures is immune to this process of marketing youth movements as harmless, historical fun. If the mods and rockers had upset the older generations, that was as nothing compared to the impact that punk rock, and particularly the band the Sex Pistols, had on the UK in the mid to late 1970s. The release of the Sex Pistols’ second single, “God Save the Queen”, coincided neatly with the Silver Jubilee in 1977; references in the lyrics to a “fascist regime” and assertions that the Queen “ain’t no human being” provoked hysterical publicity and controversy. “Concerts were cancelled; clergymen, politicians and pundits unanimously denounced the degeneracy of youth”. Marcus Lipton, M.P. for Lambeth North, declared: “If pop music is going to be used to destroy our established institutions, then it ought to be destroyed first” (HEBDIGE, 1979, p.158). However, despite all this expressed outrage, as early as the end of the 1970s punk had become a London tourist attraction. Souvenir shops sold colourful punk postcards and even punk dollies, part of a series that also included Tower of London Beefeaters and “British Bobbies”; the King’s Road in Chelsea (which, as the location of Sex Pistols’ manager Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood’s boutique, can be reasonably considered to be the birthplace of UK punk) was thronged with sightseers keen to photograph and be snarled at by pierced and spikey youths. Anecdotal accounts suggest that punks demanded money in exchange for having their picture taken, and in doing so directly addressed a common complaint of the objects of cultural tourism, the fact that “it is difficult”, as Jennifer Craik (1995) observes, “to charge fees for “the examination of culture”. These picture postcard punks in their uniform of mohawk hairstyles and leather jackets were themselves to some extent inauthentic, claims Jon Savage (2001). Punks “didn’t look like that in 1976, but nobody cares any more: [...] and the direct experiential link has gone.” The disjunction between the historical realities and the contemporary symbolism of

3 For more details, see: <https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/quadrophenia-walking-tour#GXAVkYkDD9JuMQtG.97>

punk (an illustration, perhaps, of Jean Baudrillard's free-floating signs) became ever more apparent during royal celebrations of recent years – such as the 2011 wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton – which generated a huge amount of “post-modern” souvenirs, which often aped the look and style of original punk fashion and artwork, but were quite devoid of any political menace.



Fig 1. Original Sex Pistols artwork by Jamie Reid (1977)

Fonte: fotos da autora



Fig 2. Tote bag produced by Liberty London to commemorate the royal wedding (2011)

Fonte: fotos da autora

The Sex Pistols no longer pose a threat to the established institutions but have become incorporated by them. They are now part of pop history, of “English heritage”, evidenced also by their music featuring in the London 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, the soundtrack to another irreverent, albeit this time officially sanctioned, portrayal of the Queen.⁴ Accordingly, punk remains a firmly established element of London's offer to visitors, with a number of companies offering walking, black cab, and minibus tours around significant locations and landmarks. For example, FlipsideLondon Tours offer guided walks around “Punk Rock Soho”, and claims

4 The film of the London 2012 Olympics opening ceremony can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AS-dCdYZbo>

that it “explores the history London ignores” (FLIPSIDELONDON, w/d). However, this is a questionable claim, given that punk has very evidently succumbed to the fate of oppositional places and ideas described by Jane Jacobs (1996), becoming “sanitised and depoliticised in their transit into officially sanctioned heritage”.

UK tourism doesn’t just promote past styles of popular music and youth subcultures, however; it is also engaged with marketing what is happening now. In 2017, the VisitBritain website encouraged prospective tourists to “Get ready for an incredible summer of music” at festivals, concerts, attractions and on themed tours. One clear reason for this is that music tourism represents good business for the UK. In their 2016 report, *Wish You Were Here*, UK Music, an “umbrella organisation which represents the collective interests of the UK’s commercial music industry” reported that in 2015 there were 10.4m music tourists in the UK, generating a total £3.7bn in direct and indirect spend for the country (UK MUSIC, 2017). Thirty-eight per cent of audience members at a live music event in the UK in 2015 were music tourists. They spent £38m at the box office, with each overseas visitor spending a total average of £852 whilst in the UK. Music tourism contributes significantly to the economy of regions throughout the UK, sustaining an estimated 39,034 full-time jobs. What is interesting is the diversity of music and cultural experiences VisitBritain promotes. While a number of the events featured is of a more traditional type, featuring folk and classical music, VisitBritain also showcases rock and pop festivals, and celebrations of ethnic, and sexual minority cultures. An engagement with “live” culture, in both senses of the word, has an obvious appeal to tourists in terms of both the vividness and immersive nature of such experiences, and the opportunities they offer for a sense of “existential” authenticity. However, they are perhaps also more socially and ethically fraught, given their potential to impact upon people’s lived experience and culture. Is it a good thing for youth subcultures and underground music scenes to be included in “official” versions of national culture, such as government tourism marketing, or is it a problem? Who benefits or profits from this, and who gets exploited, or loses out? Does it encourage or risk killing off living, growing cultures? Does it risk making the cool uncool? I want now to explore some of these questions looking at three high profile examples: Glastonbury Festival, Gay Pride, and the Notting Hill Carnival.

The Glastonbury Festival began as a small event in 1971, part of the hippy counterculture, with 1,500 people paying £1 for a ticket. In the decades that followed, although the Festival grew in size and scope, it maintained its “alternative” reputation and ambience. From the mid-1990s, as a consequence of both television coverage and the more widespread growth in the popularity of music festivals as a leisure activity in the UK⁵, it became increasingly attractive to a larger, and less subcultural audience. In 2017, the 200,000 tickets for Glastonbury, each costing £225, sold out in a record 25 minutes. The Festival now boasts internationally famous headline

5 As an illustration of this growth, the number of festivals listed on festival website eFestivals jumped from 496 in 2007 to 1,070 in 2015. Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/07/02/do-the-growing-number-of-music-festivals-actually-make-any-money/>

acts, luxury transport and accommodation options that can cost between £950 and £9000, and a whole range of other commercial conveniences from ATMs to artisan food trucks (JONZE, 2015). A high wall around the site keeps out “undesirables”, the intrepid fence-jumpers and “new age” travellers⁶

who once constituted a significant part of the Festival’s crowd. The BBC’s television and radio coverage of Glastonbury brings the Festival to a much wider audience across the country, almost 21 million viewers and listeners in 2017 (LDS, 2017). The appeal of Glastonbury, and all music festivals of its type, are the promises of freedom “from the constraints of daily living” and the opportunities it affords to “behave in a way not governed by conventional social norms and regulations that structure everyday life” (KIM; JAMAL, 2007, p.184). Certainly participants do experience an authentic sense of freedom and even transgression, but as Griffin et al. (2016) and other social scientists have argued, in the context of a contemporary consumer culture shaped by neoliberal market forces, such experiences “are constituted as obligatory displays that reflect a new form of governance” (2016, p.184). They observe that big music festivals, such as Glastonbury, “are now highly commercialised bounded spaces in which the experience of ‘freedom’ is commoditised, subject to external and internal regulation. They contrast these with ‘free’ parties and festivals, which ‘are unlicensed and mostly illegal events, involving only internally organised forms of regulation and commercial activity.’” (GRIFFIN, 2016, p.4). This comparison is significant, because Glastonbury has its origins in the Free Festival movement, but from 1979 was constituted as an explicitly commercial event, albeit one with an overt political and fund-raising ethos. The security and logistics of the Festival are provided by other commercial organisations, one of which – Festival Republic – has a 40% stake in Glastonbury Festival Ltd. Although small free parties continue to be held in the UK, the Free Festival movement was effectively extinguished by a combination of licensing controls, punitive legislation and police action, particularly under the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s. Particular turning points were the “Battle of the Beanfield” in 1985⁷, when police attacked a convoy of new age travellers headed for Stonehenge to stage a festival at the ancient monument, and the passing in 1994 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJA). The Act, and Clause 63 in particular, gave the police new powers to break up gatherings of twenty or more people and “shut down events featuring music that’s “characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats”, the clause was aimed unequivocally at one particular glass-eyed, cheek-chewing threat to the nation’s youth: the UK’s illegal rave scene”(MULLIN, 2014, w/p). The desire to dance and “let go” was not extinguished by the legislation, but was increasingly

6 New Age Travellers constitute a subculture that peaked in numbers and visibility in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. They pursue a type of gypsy lifestyle, they live in vehicles (often converted buses and vans) and have no permanent home or job. They explicitly reject the norms of modern, capitalist living, with an ethos and aesthetic derived from a combination of hippy, punk and rave subcultures.

7 For more on this incident see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-battle-of-the-beanfield-the-violent-new-age-traveller-clash-with-police-at-stonehenge-remembered-10287028.html>

fulfilled in commodified and controlled environments. As journalist Frankie Mullin observes, “[w]hat the CJA did [...] was create an industry, driving parties back into clubs and spawning the proliferation of festivals” (MULLIN, 2014, w/p). Festivals are a form of cultural expression that rely on their countercultural roots for their appeal, and this makes them ripe for marketing as a tourist attraction and a component of a broader ‘Cool Britannia’ image of the UK; however, they have also effectively been divested of any threats or challenges they may have posed to mainstream, ‘establishment’ culture and society. A type of culture that has historically been subject to censure and repression by the dominant classes, is now employed by them to sell Britain in the global marketplace.

Gay Pride celebrations have undergone comparable changes in recent decades. The British Tourist Authority (VisitBritain’s previous title) began to actively target gay American visitors back in 1999, when it became clear that the “pink dollar” could be a lucrative source for UK tourism. These early campaigns featured the “established gay scenes in London, Manchester and Brighton” and also promoted Britain “as home for the historic Queens of England from Elizabeth to Noel Coward, as well as modern icons like Elton John, Boy George, Rupert Everett and Sir Ian McKellen” (MEIKLE, 2015, w/p). Although there was clearly an economic agenda behind this, it was perhaps also significant that this development occurred during the tenure of an openly gay Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, and was seen as evidence that the UK, and its official bodies, was becoming more accepting of homosexuality. The VisitBritain website currently showcases four Pride events in different British cities. However, it is not the only organisation to see the financial and social advantages of aligning itself to these events; increasingly Pride attracts sponsorship from a wide range of big brands and businesses. Pride celebrations also appeal to increasing numbers of heterosexual participants, and while this could be seen as evidence of an ever more tolerant society, is there also a danger that the original meaning of the event might get lost, or at the least diluted? India Ross suggests that

What was once a political protest has, over half a century, become a boozy, bacchanalian celebration. In an era that increasingly celebrates gender fluidity and sexual liberation, Pride reflects the new freedoms of a once-maligned community that has found itself suddenly embraced. But for many, the movement is in crisis. They believe that, under the weight of commercialisation, Pride has lost sight of its identity — and of the many challenges that the gay community has still to overcome. The outsize influence of brands is “classic pinkwashing”, says Dan Glass, a prominent leftwing LGBT activist in the UK. Last summer, he was part of a group who bore a black coffin on their shoulders along the parade route at Pride in London, symbolising what they, and others, perceive to be the death of the movement. “I love Pride, I really do, but it’s been sold off to the highest bidder” (ROSS, 2016, w/p).

Britain’s Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities have experienced more than their fair share of hostility and prejudice, but have also seen their culture exploited for its exotic appeal and economic potential by both political and commercial interests. The Notting Hill Carnival is the largest and longest established

Caribbean-style carnival in the UK; it has been held in West London on the public holiday weekend at the end of August since 1966. Initially established to give West Indian immigrant communities an opportunity to express their culture and construct a sense of solidarity within a hostile and racist city, it now attracts around a million visitors, making it one of Europe's largest street festivals. Throughout its history it has been dogged with controversy and has fueled (white) public anxieties about drugs and crime, and their perceived relation with black people. This was a relation that was exploited strategically by media, government and police as a means to justify often draconian and racist approaches to social control.⁸ Consequently, in the 1970s and 1980s the Notting Hill Carnival became a flashpoint for the always tense relationship between the black community (and black youth in particular) and the police, with several events in the late 1970s culminating in riots. The Carnival was threatened with cancellation by Conservative governments throughout the 1980s – although enjoyed the support of activist groups and the local, left-wing Council as a result – and even now the idea is regularly mooted to move the event out of the residential streets of Notting Hill and into a more readily “manageable” area such as a public park. The Carnival continues to generate some complaints from residents and negative coverage in the right-wing media, and there are criticisms that it costs the taxpayer over £6 million in policing. However, the estimated £93 million that it brings into the local economy, its mass popularity, and the opportunities it creates for positive and colourful images of a diverse, multicultural Britain tend to outweigh most concerns about it from the perspective of more recent political administrations and UK tourism. As Lionel Arnaud (2016) records, “On the eve of London's selection for the 2012 Olympic Games, Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson described the carnival as an illustration “of the energy and color of our great city” and of its “ability to host world class events”. (2016, p. 10). The VisitBritain website encourages tourists to “Get down to [...] party at one of the biggest street carnivals in the world [...] which] sets the streets on fire with sweet sounds, outrageous floats and jaw-dropping costumes, all injected with spicy Caribbean flavours. And it's free!” (VISIT BRITAIN, w/d) This might be regarded as a positive development, as evidence of an “official” acceptance of the contribution of immigrant communities to British culture, but it arguably comes at a price. Arnaud (2016) records argues that discourses of “cultural diversity” can be understood as “a form of management [...] that aims to optimize the social and economic potential of the ‘ethnic minorities’.” In a context where neo-liberal market models shape public and cultural policy, “the celebration of the artistic qualities of ethnic minorities comes with their esthetization, a process that tends to erase the differences between populations and to attenuate the emotional and affective discrepancies” (ARNAUD, 2016, p. 10) records. Or, as Ishmahil Blagrove puts it,

8 For further context and analysis of this situation, a key text is *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state and law and order*, by Stuart Hall, et al. (Macmillan, 1978), which explores how the socially constructed moral panic around ‘mugging’ (street robbery) in the 1970s was used to justify and legitimize police and state control of a particular segment of British society.

[t]oday's perception of the carnival as solely an entertainment and tourist attraction is distanced from and trivialises the deep cultural struggle for individual and collective empowerment of marginalised and oppressed people. Although it is often forgotten, it began from a deprived and struggling community's desire to ease racial tensions and bridge cultural differences. (BLAGROVE, 2017, w/p).

In the case of the Notting Hill Carnival, as in so many other comparable contexts, amongst white audiences, politicians and policy makers, an interest in some aspects of black culture does not necessarily translate into a deeper concern for black people and the challenges they continue to face. As blogger Antoine Allen asserts:

Black culture isn't simply around to be fetishised or photographed like an exhibit in a museum or zoo. It is a sad indictment of the legacy of carnival if people simply adorn Black culture for two days and then ignore the racism on their on friends [sic] social media accounts, Black Lives Matter movement, inequality in the workplace, media and education for the rest of the year. There are countless marches and movements that could do with people's support. That support would help to highlight the issues people of colour face. People should not simply see one group of people as a form of entertainment. Whether that is through enjoying their music, sporting achievements or culture. The enjoyment should make you want to keep some level of awareness or empathy for the issues that impact them (SPEAKS, 2016, w/p)⁹

As these examples demonstrate, the journey undertaken by particular youth and/or subcultures from the margins to the mainstream is not a straightforward one, but the advantages or disadvantages of such a shift are not always clear cut and are in practice complex and sometimes even paradoxical. Likewise, it would be problematic to associate any problems or benefits with tourism alone, given that it is an industry that operates within a broader social and economic context. Many issues with the commercialization, recuperation and exploitation of marginal cultures precede a well-developed tourism sector based on their appeal. In addition, tourists are not a monolithic community, but massively varied in their interests, outlooks, and their levels of knowledge and engagement. It should not be assumed that they will automatically "compromise" authentic cultures, or that who is or is not a "tourist" will be immediately apparent in many contexts; some tourists can make a positive contribution to the "cool" factor of an area or event, rather than detracting from it. Tourism has the potential to present a broader and more inclusive version of a nation's history, in the case of the UK one which moves beyond an emphasis on

⁹ These are not issues that are unique to the UK, as John Charles Chasteen observed in relation to the Rio de Janeiro Carnival and samba music: The negative view foregrounds socially and racially exploitative dimensions of current carnival activities in Rio de Janeiro. Other authors have sprung to the defense of the popular carnival, however, finding in it expressions of resistance to the cultural hegemony of the dominant class.... To skeptics the glorification of an Afro-Brazilian dance is a kind of theft, an appropriation of black culture out of context.... What does all this imply about samba as a national symbol? In the final analysis, does it represent a boisterous triumph or a subtle subversion of racial equality in Brazil? Does the ostensible celebration of Afro-Brazilian culture actually undermine the struggle for equity by suggesting that it already exists, as many have argued? Quoted in Robin Sheriff, 'The theft of Carnival: national spectacle and racial politics in Rio de Janeiro.' *Cultural Anthropology* 14.1 (1999): 3-28, p. 20

“kings and queens and castles” to encompass Britain’s colonial past and its multicultural, post-colonial present, the stories of the working classes and ethnic minorities and those groups which, for whatever reason, have found themselves marginal and marginalized from mainstream society and culture. Key to the possibility of this is examining who or what controls the representation or management of a place or a culture, and who or what stands to benefit from it. When there is a disjunction between the version or history of a culture that is treasured or articulated by its creators, and the version that is promoted by legislators or exploited by commercial interests, inequalities and exclusions will inevitably be magnified and perpetuated.

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